

January 22, 2007

Mr. Keith Travis, Chairman
Kentucky Board of Education
500 Mero Street, 1st Floor
Capital Plaza Tower
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Mr. Travis:

We, the members of the Graves County Board of Education, formally request that the Kentucky Board of Education waive State Regulation 702 KAR 1:001 concerning the use of state funds for construction of a new Fancy Farm Elementary School. We believe unique aspects in this case warrant the waiver. We request that this matter be addressed at the state board's February 7 meeting to expedite construction planning here. We, as the Graves County school board, must be prepared to use the \$5 million set aside to serve Fancy Farm students from the state "Urgent Needs Fund," monies that become available July 1. We also must consider the possibility of a tax increase for funding before the Fiscal Year ends June 30, in order to take advantage of the district's current "Growth District" status.

Two quite unique circumstances about Fancy Farm Elementary School particularly warrant this waiver. The current school encompasses several aged buildings that are well below the standards of other schools in western Kentucky. The fact that those buildings are leased from St. Jerome Catholic Church means (1) that the current structure artificially locks the school into a zero growth situation and (2) the district cannot significantly improve or add on to those facilities since another institution owns them. Fancy Farm is one of only three schools in Kentucky that school districts lease from other entities.

The Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Facilities Management, recognizes Graves County as a "Growth District." Growing enrollment, which is expected to continue, throughout the Graves County School District will necessitate creating additional classroom space in our schools. Fancy Farm is a prime location to house additional students. The district's total enrollment has grown from 4,344 in the 2000-01 to a current enrollment of 4,702. That's an increase of 358 students in 6.5 years, 8.2 percent, an average of growth greater

than 1 percent annually. Since the 2003-04 school year ended, total enrollment has increased by 275 students, 6 percent in three years.

This growth has occurred despite the loss of two major Graves County industrial employers as well as other businesses in recent years. The collaboration of local governments in development and promotion of the Purchase Regional Industrial Park in northern Graves County is expected to attract one or more major employers to the area, creating even greater need for classroom space.

For these unique reasons we believe a waiver of State Regulation 702 KAR 1:001 is appropriate in the case of Fancy Farm Elementary School. We request that the Kentucky Board of Education consider this request at its next meeting and that the state board would grant such a waiver.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lunele Leonard, Chairman
Kevin Curtsinger, Vice-Chairman
Mark Wilson, Legislative Liaison
Ronnie Holmes
Donnie Reed

CC: Keith Travis, home address
Kevin Noland, Commissioner of Education
Mary Ann Miller, Policy Advisor
Senator Ken Winters
Rep. Fred Nesler